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Section: TICKET

DVD-licious possibilities: Classic movies, TV shows on disc

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It's been a great year for a movie buff or TV lover with a DVD player and some disposable income. As the DVD format expands its dominance over videocassettes, movie studios continue to release important films from their vaults, while television series from past and present have become available for endless reruns at the time of your choosing.

Here's a guide to some notable DVDs released this year, with an emphasis on boxed sets and special editions. Since many of this year's and 2002's most popular and critically acclaimed movies are already out on DVD - including "Finding Nemo," "Chicago," "The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers" and "Bowling for Columbine" - and you won't need my help in finding them, they won't be mentioned here. The prices included below are list prices; discounts often are available.

Movies

Several of the 20th century's top movie directors are represented with boxed sets of their most famous films.

"The Billy Wilder DVD Collection" (\$129.96, MGM Home Entertainment) brings together nine movies from Wilder's later years (1957 and after) and includes such irrepressible hits as "Some Like It Hot," "The Apartment" and "Irma La Douce," as well as entertaining but less-well-known titles like "The Fortune Cookie" and "One, Two, Three." (A 2002 set with the same title from Paramount collected "Sunset Boulevard," "Stalag 17" and "Sabrina.") Only "Some Like It Hot" includes several documentary bonus features.

Three epic, globe-spanning films by Wilder's English contemporary, David Lean - "The Bridge on the River Kwai" and "Lawrence of Arabia," both Oscar winners, and "A Passage to India" - are packaged in "The David Lean Collection" (Columbia TriStar Home Video, \$49.95).

Five of French director Francois Truffaut's most personal films, beginning with 1959's "The 400 Blows," are collected in "The Adventures of Antoine Doinel" (The Criterion Collection, five discs, \$99.95), with extensive bonus features and essays. Each of the films stars actor Jean-Pierre Leaud playing the role of Antoine

Doinel as he ages from his early teens through marriage, fatherhood and divorce.

If the aforementioned movies embody the visions of singular directors, the James Bond extravaganzas represent the triumph of concept and production. MGM has released 20 of the Bond films in Volumes Two and Three of its series, following last year's release of Volume One, and each film comes with a director's commentary and documentaries. Unfortunately, the volumes have not been organized either chronologically or by the actor playing Bond, so if you want only, say, the Sean Connery films, you will need to get all three sets. At \$124.96 each, Volume One includes "Dr. No," "GoldenEye," "Goldfinger," "Licence To Kill," "The Man With the Golden Gun," "The Spy Who Loved Me" and "Tomorrow Never Dies"; Volume Two features "From Russia With Love," "You Only Live Twice," "Diamonds Are Forever," "Moonraker," "For Your Eyes Only," "The Living Daylights" and "The World Is Not Enough"; and Volume Three contains "Thunderball," "On Her Majesty's Secret Service," "Live and Let Die," "Octopussy," "A View to a Kill" and "Die Another Day."

"Alien Quadrilogy" (Fox Home Entertainment, nine discs, \$99.98) brings together "Alien," "Aliens," "Alien 3" and "Alien Resurrection," but that's just for starters. This boxed set packs in 45 hours of bonus materials, including both the original 1979 "Alien" and Ridley Scott's 2003 director's cut, plus a new commentary by Scott, Sigourney Weaver's original screen test and a bunch of documentaries. The other three movies get similar treatment, with added scenes and new commentaries. Finally, an additional disc includes a new interview with Scott and several more features. (In January, each of the films will be released individually in two-disc sets that will include much of the bonus material on the boxed set.)

Several of Hollywood's all-time most popular leading men are represented by new collections and individual films.

"The Gold Rush," "Modern Times," "The Great Dictator" and "Limelight" represent films from throughout Charlie Chaplin's lengthy career as one of the giants of the silent screen and a formidable creative force in the sound era. They are available in the "Charlie Chaplin Collection, Vol. 1" (Warner Home Video, eight discs, \$89.92), with many bonus features, or as individual two-disc films (\$29.95 each).

Humphrey Bogart, one of Hollywood's most unique stars, can be seen in various new Warner DVDs, including excellent two-disc special editions of "Casablanca" and "The Treasure of the Sierra Madre" (both \$26.99) and single-disc versions of "To Have and Have Not" and "High Sierra" (\$19.98 apiece), all with abundant bonus features. Other companies have released some late Bogart films, such as "The Harder They Fall" (Columbia TriStar, \$24.95) and "The Desperate Hours" (Paramount Home Video, \$19.99).

"The Dirty Harry Collection" (Warner, \$68.92) celebrates Clint Eastwood, another Hollywood tough guy. This boxed set includes all five films in which Eastwood portrayed the iconoclastic San Francisco police detective Harry Callahan. Warner has also released new DVD editions of seven later Eastwood films, including "Where Eagles Dare," "Tightrope" and "Honkytonk Man," all \$19.98 apiece.

Action heroes of the animal and animated persuasion are well represented in "The Looney Tunes Golden Collection" (Warner, four discs, \$64.92), an assortment of 56 restored and remastered shorts starring Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Elmer Fudd and the rest of the crazy bunch.

Finally, here are some memorable Hollywood films now available in DVD special editions: 1925's silent "The Phantom of the Opera" starring Lon Chaney, and its

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1929 sound-added version (Image Entertainment/Milestone Film & Video, \$24.99); Ernst Lubitsch's suave and very funny "Trouble in Paradise" (Criterion, \$39.95) from 1932; 1937's "The Awful Truth" (Columbia TriStar, \$24.95), a great battle of the sexes between Cary Grant and Irene Dunne; 1938's sparkling "The Adventures of Robin Hood" (Warner, \$26.98); 1951's "All About Eve" (Fox Studio Classics, \$19.98), starring Bette Davis; Disney's 1959 "Sleeping Beauty" (Walt Disney Home Video, \$29.99); 1961's "West Side Story" (MGM, \$39.98), the greatest screen musical ever made; 1978's "National Lampoon's Animal House" (Universal Home Video, \$19.98), a showcase for John Belushi; 1983's wonderfully irreverent "Monty Python's The Meaning of Life" (Universal, \$26.98); and 1994's "The Lion King" (Disney, \$29.99).

Television

This year we've seen an explosion in the number of TV series repackaged in the DVD format. From vintage series such as "The Honeymooners" to '70s-era "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" to such current faves as "Alias" and even some out-and-out flops, there's a good chance that if it was on the air, it's now or soon will be on DVD. Like an ugly puppy in the pet store, somebody will love it and want to take it home - how else to explain why the seven episodes made of "My Big Fat Greek Life," the show even creator-star Nia Vardalos reportedly lost interest in, are now available (Columbia TriStar, \$24.95).

Here's a decade-by-decade look at this year's highlights:

1950s

"I Love Lucy - The Complete First Season" (Paramount, nine discs, \$119.99): From 1951, all 35 original episodes starring Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz have been digitally remastered. Bonuses include the series pilot, Ball's radio show and more.

"The Honeymooners - Classic 39 Episodes" (Paramount, five discs, \$49.99): Starring Jackie Gleason, Art Carney, Audrey Meadows and Joyce Randolph, this includes all 39 episodes from the 1955 season, the only full-length episodes ever filmed. Plus rare interviews and "The Honeymooners Anniversary Special."

1960s

"The Dick Van Dyke Show - Season One" and "Season Two" (Image Entertainment, five discs each; \$69.99 apiece): The complete first two seasons (1961-1962 and 1962-1963) of Carl Reiner's popular home and workplace comedy, starring Dick Van Dyke and Mary Tyler Moore, are available for the first time, with commentaries, interviews and short documentaries.

"The Ultimate Johnny Carson Collection" (R2 Entertainment, three discs, \$69.99): The first two discs collect memorable moments from "The Tonight Show" starring Johnny Carson from 1962-1992. The third includes the complete final two episodes plus bonus features such as "Johnny Goes Home," a visit to Carson's hometown in Nebraska.

1970s

"All in the Family - The Complete Second Season" and "Sanford and Son - The Second Season" (both Columbia TriStar, three discs, \$29.95 apiece): These topical sitcoms, starring Carroll O'Connor and Redd Foxx, respectively, were the two most-popular television programs during the 1972-1973 season, the second for both.

"SOAP - The Complete First Season" (Columbia TriStar, three discs, \$29.95): Created

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by Susan Harris, this sitcom parody of an afternoon soap opera debuted in 1977 and gave American audiences its first openly gay character (Billy Crystal in his first acting role).

1980s

"Shogun" (Paramount, five discs, \$79.99): Richard Chamberlain stars as an English navigator shipwrecked in 17th century Japan in this very successful 1980 miniseries based on James Clavell's sprawling novel. It includes a documentary on the making of "Shogun," featuring new interviews with cast and crew members.

"Cheers - The Complete First Season" (Paramount, four discs, \$49.99): The first 22 episodes, from 1982, of this popular NBC sitcom, stars Ted Danson as a former Boston Red Sox baseball pitcher and current bar owner. Bonus features include an interview with Danson, a "Cheers" trivia game and "Coach Ernie Pantusso's Rules of the Game."

"Smiley's People" (Acorn Media, three discs, \$69.95): In 1982 Alec Guinness recreated his role as British spy master George Smiley in this second BBC miniseries based on one of John le Carre's "Karla" novels, following the earlier success of "Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy" (released on DVD last year). 1990s

"Prime Suspect 1" (HBO Video, two discs, \$29.98): Helen Mirren stars as Detective Chief Inspector Jane Tennynson, who takes over a serial murder case in this Granada Television six-episode miniseries broadcast by PBS in 1992.

"Homicide: Life on the Street - The Complete Seasons 1 and 2" (A&E, four discs, \$69.95) and "The Complete Season 3" (A&E, six discs, \$99.95): One of TV's best police dramas, "Homicide" brought a new realism to the genre. The series started off sporadically, airing only 13 episodes during its first two seasons in 1993 and 1994, before settling into a regular timeslot for the 20-episode third season in 1995-96. Both boxed sets include interviews with the principal creators and directors and selected commentaries on episodes.

"ER - The Complete First Season" (Warner, four discs, \$59.98): All 25 episodes, including the 90-minute pilot of the surprise dramatic hit from the 1994-1995 TV season are presented on four two-sided discs, with additional behind-the-scenes documentaries and audio commentaries.

2000s

There are so many contemporary TV series out on DVD, there's only enough room to list some of the most prominent ones to go on sale this year:

"The West Wing - The Complete First Season" (1999-2000) (Warner, four discs, \$59.98).

"Alias - The Complete First Season" (2001-02) (Buena Vista Home Entertainment, six discs, \$69.99) and "Alias - The Complete Second Season" (2002-03) (same; on sale Tuesday).

"24 - Season Two" (2002-03) (Fox, six discs, \$69.98).

"The Sopranos - The Complete Fourth Season" (2002) (HBO, four discs, \$99.98).

"Six Feet Under - The Complete First Season" (2001) (HBO, four discs, \$99.98).

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"CSI: Crime Scene Investigation - The Complete First Season" and "The Complete Second Season" (Paramount, six discs apiece, \$89.99 each).

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